



The Link

September 1999

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

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Lead Story

Charles Adams, Glenda Humiston Featured at The Organization's Regional Conference

Fannie Richardson, Colorado

Two speakers with dynamic messages were featured during the Northern Plains' Regional Chapter annual conference June 11-12, 1999, in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



Glenda Humiston, USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, spoke on several issues, including USDA's budget, cooperation among agencies, and increased visibility for USDA agencies. **Charles Adams**, Regional Conservationist for the Southeast Region, offered members encouragement and hope in his message.

Humiston explained the Budget "Cap" on USDA and how NRCS fits into the bigger picture of USDA and its priority issues. She also elaborated on the effort to deal with the many issues our country faces. Getting a strong team within the beltway is crucial, she said. In Humiston's opinion NRCS is doing this. She also emphasized everybody is under severe budget constraints.

Agencies should stop fighting among themselves and work together, she added. If we could get one solid message out across the nation, it ought to be a message of service. We should also try to help the American public to understand where we fit into their "well being." We fit into their well being by making sure they have a healthy environment and a safe secure food supply. To do that the American public should be willing to make some investments. As long as American farmers only get one or two cents on the food dollar, we are going to need somebody doing risk management and price support programs.

There is also a need for research and development activities to be done by public institutions, and made easily available to all producers. Farmers and private landowners are also going to need someone to help them deal with increasingly complex environmental needs. There are laws and regulations coming down every day.

There is not enough understanding of how a cooperative technical assistance approach should fit into actions on the private landscape. NRCS has a role in helping private landowners maintain good stewardship.

Ms. Humiston identified the three high priorities of current USDA leadership as:

- **Rural Safety Net:** Rural economies are starving; Farmers are going bankrupt.
- **International Trade:** Sell more American farm products overseas.
- **Food Security:** Safety of the meat inspectors, food stamps, welfare, and similar programs, also making sure that programs are available to provide nutritional food lunches.

She stated that NRCS needs to do more outreach to various audiences, including the media. More media exposure is needed, she said. We also need to utilize national interest groups, within government regulations and procedure.

Ms. Humiston concluded her presentation by identifying NRCS' major issues:

- Outreach To Underserved Customers
- Clean Water Action Plan
- Wetlands Enhancement and Protection
- Climate Change
- Coastal/Oceans/Hypoxia
- President's Livability Agenda and Rural Economic Development
- Invasive Species Activities and Drought Council
- Technology Improvements and Utilization

More ➡



In his message, **Charles Adams** admonished participants, but he also offered them words of wisdom and hope.

Adams stated that some of us have had life-changing experiences within the past year. Using himself as an example, Adams remarked that as he embarks on some of these changes, he is encouraged by much of what is happening, yet discouraged by a lot of opportunity that we allow to pass us by. Like many of us, he said he wonders, Why so much change?

Why are we so perplexed, annoyed, distressed and confused? He said he looks around him and sees NRCS employees who were once part of the solution that are now part of the problem.

Within six months we will not just talk about the new millennium, we will be in the millennium. Adams said he is frightened because many of us won't be ready for it. We are paralyzed and frozen in time. Our thoughts are not maturing. Our conversations are not encouraging. Our energy is not focused on helping

others. We are mummified with the prospect of administrative convergence and the Common Computing Environment. Rather than participate and help fashion the change, we all too often choose to resist by running, quitting, transferring, and some of us have chosen to adopt a bad attitude. That is, to throw rocks and hide our hands, pass the buck, come in late - leave early, and when asked to do our jobs we swell up, become sullen and quarrelsome.

Mr. Adams stated that something terrible and debilitating is happening to our senses and to our work environment. Something valuable is being lost as we cluster in groups and gossip with very harmful conversations about each other. That something which is being lost is the strong image of a God-conscious, Christ-centered, spiritually-intoxicated individual. As we appraise ourselves, we need to work on the fact that we are talking too much and doing too little.

Despite these current challenges, Mr. Adams is hopeful for the future. He concluded his presentation with a reading titled "I Refuse To Be Discouraged." He wished us all good luck as we cross the threshold into the new millennium.



Annual Training Conference Update Mark Your Calendars!—Don't Miss It!

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees will hold its 8th Training Conference December 7-11, 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia. Here are several reasons one should attend this year's conference:

- Hear from national policy makers and farm leaders
- Attend dynamic training sessions
- Network with NRCS partners
- Network with NRCS employees from all across the nation and at all levels within the agency

Sarah Marshall, of National Headquarters' Outreach Division, is coordinating this year's conference. Please contact her at 301-504-2224 or your regional representatives with any questions or concerns about the national training conference.

"I Refuse To Be Discouraged"

*I refuse to be discouraged,
To be sad, or to cry;
I refuse to be down-hearted,
And here's the reason why:*

*I have a God who's mighty-
Who's sovereign and supreme;
I have a God who loves me,
And I am on His team.*

*He is all-wise and powerful-
Jehovah is His name;
Though everything is changeable,
My God remains the same.*

*My God knows all that's happening-
Beginning to the end;
His presence is my comfort;
He is my dearest Friend.*

*When sickness comes to weaken me-
To bring my head down low,
I call upon my mighty God;
Into His arms I go.*

*When circumstances threaten
To rob me of my peace,
He draws me close unto His breast
Where all my strivings cease.*

*When my heart melts within me,
And weakness takes control,
He gathers me into His arms-
He soothes my heart and soul.*

*The great "I AM" is with me-
My life is in His hands;
The "God of Jacob" is my hope;
It's in His strength I stand.*

*I refuse to be defeated-
My eyes are on my God;
He has promised to be with me
As through this life I tread.*

*I'm looking past all my circumstances
To Heaven's throne above;
My prayers have reached the heart of God-
I'm resting in His love.*

*I give God thanks in everything-
My eyes are on His face;
The battle's His, the vict'ry mine;
He'll help me win the race.*

The President's Message



Greetings!

As I begin my third year as your president, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their good wishes and support. I feel confident that The Organization's leadership, working with each of you, will be able to meet the challenges ahead working together with good will and common purposes. I also want to say a special word of thanks to Sarah R. Marshall, Willie R. Rawls, Jacqueline Thibodeaux, Harvey Mack, Dewayne Mays, Charles Adams, Ann English, William Taylor and Lynette Harris, who have left the executive board after giving exceptional service to The Organization. Thank each of you for your commitment. Finally, I want to welcome eight new executive board members, with their enthusiasm and fresh ideas—Geri Osborn, LaSharn Belt, Charles Roberts, Cynthia Jordan, Jean Swygert, Denise Brooks, Selena Miller and Brenda Moore.

Many of you may be asking, what can we expect from our president and the newly elected executive board? What will be their agenda for The Organization? These are fair questions. I will respond by saying that we do not have a personal agenda for The Organization. Rather, we see our role as working with the membership to provide leadership to reach a consensus on a broad range of issues that come before us. My philosophy as your president remains the same—to represent the will of the membership as a whole and to facilitate the implementation of policies and programs that meet the needs and expectations of you, the members. The Organization is not merely the Executive Board's Organization, it is your Organization; the agenda is not merely the Executive Board's agenda, it is your agenda. The president and the executive board are your trustees, who are entrusted with the authority given to us by The Organization's Constitution and By-laws to conduct the business in the best interest of all. I take this trust very seriously, and throughout my remaining term in office, I will seek to honor the trust you have placed in me.

Finally, let me say a word about where we are as an Organization. I firmly believe we are at a very high point, but we can

stagnate and fall behind our competition or we can take bold new steps and move ahead. I sense strongly that all of you want to move forward boldly to meet the new challenges that lie before us. If that is our choice as an organization, we must begin now to fully implement our strategic plan, which gives us a clear and concise vision that helps guide us to our destination. We must develop and implement a strong self-development plan for current and future career opportunities; seek ways and means to reach the under-served individuals and groups, and make plans to attend and participate in regional and national training conferences. If we do these things, we are ready to take the next steps to join in this journey.

James E. Tatum
James E. Tatum, President

From the Treasurer...

Greetings!!!

When we try to do great things and make improvements, things don't always go as planned. And that brings me to the first problem we had to resolve this year. As many of you know, membership applications for people who paid their national dues at the training conference in Little Rock were lost.

At this time, we believe that all of those members have been properly credited. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused, I want to thank LaSharn Belt for all her efforts in making sure all members who paid their national dues at Little Rock have been credited for 1999.

To prevent this problem from occurring again, I will not collect ANY NATIONAL DUES at the national training conference in Atlanta in December. Also, in an effort to reduce operating costs, I am asking that only NATIONAL AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP DUES be paid to the National Organization Treasurer.

All dues should be sent to me at 508 Woodmere Drive, Kingsport, Tennessee 37663-2951, payable by check or money order. Please complete a 1999 membership application. It is important that a completed membership application accompany the dues so that every paid member has a current mailing address in The Organization's database. This will ensure that you will receive all correspondence. Please do not send any correspondence to the old Post Office Box in Clinton, Maryland.

In addition, each member will be responsible for paying his or her chapter

dues, if applicable, directly to your local chapter treasurer.

At this point in time, I can report that the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees' financial status is great. Members who have not paid their 1999 national dues should do so as quickly as possible. Remember, all dues must be paid before November 1, 1999.

If you have questions concerning the financial operations of The Organization, feel free to contact me at the address above or by telephone 423-239-4649 (home) or 423-282-3232 (work) or E-Mail at:

croberts@tn.nrcs.usda.gov or
cvroberts1@juno.com.

Thanks for helping to make The National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees the best Organization in the land!

Charles V. Roberts, Treasurer

From the Editor...

The 1999 Communications Committee is working on several projects this year.

Watch out for more changes as we attempt to make this newsletter the best that it could possibly be.

One of our goals this year is to publish an electronic newsletter, in addition to hard copies to improve accessibility in an effort to increase our readership.

We need articles from members. Share information on program activities, promotions, etc. with others through the newsletter. The deadline for the next issue is October 7.

In addition, please visit our web site at the following address:

<http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/ORGAN/ss.htm>. The site also can be accessed from the NRCS homepage by pointing your Internet browser to "WHOM WE WORK WITH" on the menu. Next, point your browser to "Other Partners" and scroll down the alphabetical list to the National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees.

If you have questions or comments, please let us know. We are interested in working with the Executive Board and our members to make this organization viable and strong. We need your input to achieve this goal. I am very interested in hearing from all of you. I can be reached by telephone at 651-602-7859; voice mail, 9041-7859, or e-mail at:

sylvia.rainford@mn.usda.gov.

Sylvia Rainford, Editor

Civil Rights...

Civil Rights Compliance In Program Delivery - A Review

*Richard A. Bruce
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Following is a brief review of Civil Rights compliance in program delivery. It is offered as a reminder of NRCS employee responsibilities in this process.

With respect to Civil Rights compliance in program delivery, discrimination must be found to be valid on one or more of the following grounds: race, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap.

Three forms of discrimination are disparate treatment, disparate impact, and systematic discrimination. Disparate treatment is overt discrimination. In this case, the agency or organization treats some beneficiaries less favorably than other beneficiaries because of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap.

Disparate impact involves unjustified, seemingly neutral practices that in theory apply equally to all beneficiaries, but in fact fall more harshly upon protected groups than on other beneficiaries. This form of discrimination impacts certain groups in different ways. An example would be serving all beneficiaries in English when a significant number of beneficiaries are non-English speaking.

With systematic discrimination, the system is the problem. It has to do with discriminatory policy, procedure, or methods of administration by an agency or organization.

Complaints can be either verbal or written. When a complainant raises concerns that appear to be discriminatory, he or she should be advised to file a written complaint with the Director of Civil Rights, USDA, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call the Office of Civil Rights at 202-720-5964.

Discrimination Complaint Facts:

1. Employees should know NRCS complaint procedures.
2. The complainant has 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination to file a complaint.
3. Formal complaints received at any administrative level must be forwarded to the Director of Civil Rights, USDA, within 24 hours, with a copy to the Director of the Civil Rights Compliance Division.

4. Resolution of a formal complaint should not be attempted at any administrative level.

5. Letters, dates, conversations, and other pertinent information should be documented in official 230-11 files.

Documentation of Written Complaints should include:

1. Date and time of delivery of the written complaint.
2. Any conversations between the complainant and the person receiving the complaint.
3. That state procedures for processing the complaint were followed at each administrative level.
4. Date and time the written complaint leaves the office.

Existing management tools that incorporate civil rights responsibilities into all programs, operations, and other management functions include: resource assessments, business plans, position descriptions and performance standards, other forms of documentation, and training. For more details about employee responsibilities in assuring Civil Rights compliance in program delivery, refer to NRCS' GM230, Part 405, which covers Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery, or contact the Office of Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. at 301-504-2287.

NRCS News...

Making a Difference

*Edward Wright, Southeast
Regional Office*

We always hear about people who have limited resources, are socially disadvantaged, or are underserved. People in these communities are often faced with barriers of limited finances, discrimination, and a culture which makes communication difficult. So what are we doing to help them?

NRCS employees are building partnerships, promoting outreach and increasing awareness on conservation and environmental issues. **Wanda Thomas**, Employee Development Specialist with



National Employee Development Center, NRCS in Fort Worth, Texas has been a volunteer in East Texas for the past year. Ms. Thomas works as a weekend volunteer in Sweet Union, Texas three hours east of Fort Worth to educate landowners on conservation and water concerns.

Excited about the wealth of information and services NRCS has to offer, Ms. Thomas contacted **Wayne Griffin**, Quality Management Specialist, South Central Regional Office, Ft. Worth, Texas to assist in bringing conservation



awareness to Sweet Union, Texas. Mr. Griffin came to her assistance, armed with information. He realized many people distrust the government because of their negative experiences. However, Mr. Griffin inspired the community with his enthusiasm. He continues to meet with people on weekends, making himself available when needed, and following through on his promises.

Mr. Griffin brought in Troy Mumphrey, Resource Conservationist, NRCS, to assist him. Mr. Mumphrey was excited that this community was taking charge of its destiny. He researched methods to help families obtain running water and test their wells.

Individuals such as Griffin and Mumphrey help communities overcome the challenges they face every day.

Identifying a community and establishing a relationship of mutual respect and dialog is one of the most-effective ways to reach people who are underserved, have limited resources or are socially disadvantaged.

Several Organization Members Received Honor Awards

Jackie Diggs, National Headquarters

Several members of The Organization were honored for outstanding achievements during USDA's annual Honor Award ceremony held recently in Washington, D.C. The following two members received individual awards.

P. Dwight Holman, Deputy Chief for Management, received the 1999 Honor Award in Equal Opportunity for outstanding achievements in recruiting and

retaining a diverse staff at the Southeast Regional Office during his tenure as Regional Conservationist. He has continued to provide leadership in recruitment, retention, accommodations, and accessibility and holds managers accountable for all aspects of NRCS civil rights responsibilities.

Troy S. Mumphrey, Limited Resource Specialist, Tyler, Texas, received the Honor Award in Public Service for his efforts in resolving health and life-threatening conditions derived from drinking contaminated water in three under-served communities.

During the ceremony, Secretary Dan Glickman honored 52 individuals, 4 teams and 45 groups, for their outstanding achievements, during the 53rd Annual Honor Awards Ceremony in June.

This article highlighted individual award recipients. Other Organization members who received team and group awards will be featured in the next issue. Please contact Jackie Diggs at 202-720-7329 if you received an award in these categories.



Book Review...

Super Charged

Author: Peter C. Siegal

Dorothea Martinez

“What you see is who you’ll be”. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”. Each of these statements refers to how we think or how we perceive things in our environment.

Peter Siegal is one of America’s foremost sports hypnotherapist and a leader in the field of mental training for peak performance. In his book, *Super Charged*, he explains how making changes within ourselves can help life works for us, not against us.

Being optimistic in our thinking is the foundation upon which we succeed at any task, according to Siegal. In this book, he lists several factors and components of optimism. They include the following:

Always look for the Good; Unconditional Positive Faith; Expect the Best; and Refuse to Recognize or Accept Failure.

Sometimes when we are striving to accomplish a task, we hit a stumbling block. Siegal refers to it not as a stumbling block but as merely a situation—a learning tool. We can find something good in every situation, he said. For example, a basketball team loses the game, but one player on the team says to him/herself, “We lost, but I played a better game today than I’ve ever played. I have definitely improved.” Instead of looking at the situation negatively, he or she found the good in that situation, which served as a motivator for the individual to continue to find positives in other situations.

According to Siegal every situation encountered is a separate and individualized experience. It’s a present concern that has nothing to do with what was or what might be. It exists right now and has whatever value you give it. We give each situation a degree of importance and we can either blow it out of proportion or look at it as something we need to work our way through and continue to move forward. It’s all in the way we think.

Unconditional Positive Faith is another factor that I found fascinating. Believing there is good out there for us. Siegal tells us, “There is abundant goodness within life—that we are linked to the goodness of life, and should therefore, align our thoughts and actions to expect it as a natural continual occurrence for ourselves.” The slightest inkling of doubt is all that’s necessary to keep our potential goodness as a fantasy—a daydream that will never materialize, according to Siegal.

In essence, the author is saying the same manner in which we sometimes say, “I knew it—it always happens to me.” We should think instead, “all things happen for a reason.” As we rationalize why things happened the way they did, we would probably find something good in the reason things happened as they did. We should think only good thoughts. Negative thoughts set us back and, in many cases stop us from fulfilling our dreams. When we expect the best in whatever we do, we literally put fourth more effort to ensure that we will reach our goals.

Last year, I assisted my son with his book report on the life of Michael Jordan. The book my son used stated that Michael spent endless hours alone on the court perfecting his skills. As he practiced, he visualized how he wanted things to be. He saw himself scoring over and over and heard the wild cheers of the crowd as he assisted in bringing his team to victory.

Never once did he think, “what if I don’t do well?” He visualized himself doing well and literally imagined what it felt like to be the star he ultimately became. His thinking was positive as he practiced—that was, in essence, what helped him to be successful. We can only act in the manner in which we think, Siegal said.

Always expect the best, the author said. We can train our minds to believe; to look at things not as they presently are, but as our faith dictates they can be. By expecting the best in everything we do, we demonstrate that we believe the best exists for us. Our entire inner domain becomes positively sensitized as we keep our mental images and emotions aligned in a manner inducing life circumstances to work resourcefully for us. He goes on to say that through positive expectations, we literally ignite a “success force” within us, which compels action towards our perfected vision.

The factor that I found to be most important in attempting to accomplish goals is, “Refuse to recognize or accept failure”. The word, failure, sounds as if it’s the end—as if one has given up. When Siegal talks about failure he states that something is only a failure if you choose to label it as such. You can choose to change your perceptions to recognize and accept that there are no failures, but only outcomes.

Every outcome has some good for you if you’ll look for it and let it teach you what you need to know in order to succeed. For example, an individual does a presentation and receives feedback in the evaluations. Some comments are negative. Instead of the individual beating him or herself up because everyone did not rate him or her outstanding, a lesson can be learned whereas the negative comments can be looked at as an opportunity to improve one’s presentation skills. The presenter reviews the feedback and says to him or herself, “Okay, I need to speak louder or elaborate a little more on this specific subject next time.” Instead of looking at the comments as negative, use them as an opportunity for growth and improvement. The next time you will do a better job because of those comments. Had it not been for the feedback the same mistakes would probably have been repeated.

Information from this review was taken from only a few chapters. The book contains endless motivational information that I found inspirational. It is a book that must be read by anyone with a dream with visions of making it a reality.

Calendar of Events...

September 27-29 (Missouri)

*Alliance for Environmental
Stewardship: A Comprehensive
Approach*

City: St. Louis

For more information, contact Sara Snyder at (312) 266-3311.

December 7-11 (Georgia)

*The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service
Employees 8th Annual Training Conference*

City: Atlanta.

For more information, contact Sarah Marshall at 301-504-2224.

December 15-17 - (Louisiana)

*The Department of Agriculture and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will co-sponsor
Conservation 2000 - A Conference to Highlight Local, State and Federal Programs.*

For more information, contact the Conservation Technology Information Center at 765-494-9555;
or e-mail: ctic@ctic.purdue.edu.

January 30-Feb 3 (Colorado)

City: Colorado Springs

National Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Meeting

Details on pre-registration and agenda may be found at
<http://www.nacdnet.org/meetings/00annual/index.htm>

1999 Communications Committee

*Sylvia Rainford, Chair
Midwest
651-602-7859*

*Cara Clark
Midwest
217-398-5273*

*Jasper Parker
South Central
918-423-8730*

*Perdita Belk
Southeast
803-765-5402*

*Jacquelyne Diggs
National Headquarters
202-720-7329*

*Suzanne Pugh
Southeast
601-368-3164*

*W. Esther Bright
Northern Plains
303-236-2910, Ext. 239*

*Michell Dunn
East
301-504-2304*

*Jarvis Willis
South Central
817-509-3413*

*Richard Bruce
West
505-761-4455*

*Naomi Hamilton-Johnson
Southeast
615-736-5472*

*Ed Wright
Southeast
404-347-6157*

*James Burgess
East
724-545-1022x101*

*Dorothea Martinez
Southeast
803-253-3899*



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL BLACK NRCS EMPLOYEES
"The Organization"
1999 Membership Application

Name: (Please Print Clearly) _____
Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: () _____
Willing to serve on _____ committee, if asked? Yes ___ **No** ___

About the Organization

The Organization is comprised of the National Organization and chapters throughout the United States. Membership is open to all Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees and to any other persons supporting the goals and objectives of The Organization.

National Membership dues are \$35.00. Each local chapter establishes its own dues, which are payable in addition to national dues. Membership dues will not be accepted after November 1, 1999 for the current calendar year. Only National Dues are sent to the National Treasurer. Local Dues are payable to Local Chapter Treasurers, if applicable. Not all areas across the nation have local chapters.

National Dues	\$ 35.00
Chapter Dues (If Applicable) _____	\$.00
Name of Chapter _____	
Total Enclosed	\$35.00

Please complete the following information you would like listed in The Organization's Networking Directory.

Name _____ **Title** _____
Home Address _____
Work Address _____
E-mail _____ **Region** _____
Contact Telephone () _____ **Fax** _____

To become a member of The Organization, complete this application; send 2 copies, enclose check or money order and mail to: (Make Check payable to: "The Organization")

Charles V. Roberts, Treasurer
The Organization
 508 Woodmere Drive
 Kingsport, Tennessee 37663-2951

National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees

Sylvia Rainford, Editor

The Link

P.O. Box 65751

St. Paul, Minnesota 55165-0751